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ABSTRACT

The management of a reading program should be based on objectives rather than on tasks. There are eight functions that apply to successful management: planning, organization, staffing, direction, control, innovation, representation, and communication. The R3C concept (reading coordinator, reading committee, reading center) is helpful to delegate the responsibilities for the reading program to individuals or smaller groups. The principal of the school should assign someone who would have intelligence, confidence, and dedication to be the reading coordinator. The coordinator would act as the leader of the reading program. Teachers from different grade levels should be put on the reading committee to help and advise the coordinator. The school reading center would contain materials available to all teachers in the school. Its function would be to help the teachers achieve the goals of the reading program by making them aware of what resources are available, improving the center environment, and simplifying check-out procedure. The principal would meet with the reading committee to analyze needs and agree on goals, then the coordinator might begin detailed planning and other functions with the reading committee. References are included. (AW)

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"Managing a Reading/Learning Environment"
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School personnel responsible for teaching children to read are being pressured to produce better results. The Right to Read campaign, performance contracts, national assessment, and the stress on accountability have all stimulated these people to seek better ways to manage personnel, facilities, materials, equipment, and other resources available to them so that each child will achieve to the best of his ability.

American schools in 1971 have more need for good management than ever before due to the new positions that have been created in the last few years including those of aides, remedial reading teachers, and subject area supervisors and consultants. Also, many new materials and pieces of equipment have been added to schools creating problems of usage, storage, and repair. New libraries have been created, other libraries expanded;

and media centers, combining both library and audio-visual materials have been developed. The problem is to manage these resources so that the objectives of the school's reading program can be achieved.

It is difficult to set specific objectives for all children in a school because different children will have different needs. A desirable goal for one child may not be a desirable goal for another child. If objectives become too general, we may lose sight of individuals (8). Objectives must relate not only to the total school reading program (2) but also to each child (3), and this calls for planning and organization in different ways than has been traditionally done.

The school principal will be responsible for the success or failure of his reading program, if one person in the school system is to be held accountable for the reading program. However, other members of the middle management team, such as the reading consultant or general supervisors, also have responsibilities and can contribute much toward building a program that will achieve the objectives set for the school in reading. All members of a school staff have responsibilities in management: helping to determine the objectives of the school reading program, establishing an environment where efficient learning will occur, and organizing materials, facilities, and equipment so that each child's needs in reading can be met.

The management of a reading program should be by objectives rather than by tasks. For example, a task might be to purchase books for children to read in class. An objective might be to develop in each child a love of and appreciation for good books. The tasks are determined

after the goals have been determined. Management by objectives changes the emphasis from procedures, such as purchasing books, to results such as children reading and enjoying books.

Management is not an exact science. Nevertheless, there are eight functions that apply to the successful management of a reading program. These are planning, organization, staffing, direction, control, innovation, representation, and communication (1). Wise application of these management functions should insure better results for the reading program.

Planning involves the setting of objectives for the reading program. After the objectives are established, the steps for achieving the objectives need to be planned.

Organization has been defined as " . . . [a] form of . . . human association for the attainment of a common purpose." (5) Continuous progress plans, remedial reading programs, and reading centers are types of organizations that can be created to accomplish the objectives.

Staffing includes not only the selection of personnel but also their training. Teachers who became members of a school team should be carefully selected to insure that the best person available is selected for each position open. New teachers need careful guidance through their first year so that they can be helped to develop to their full potential. Inservice training in reading at the school level can be accomplished through visitation, faculty meetings, professional journals and books, and in day to day contacts among members of a dynamic staff.

Direction involves establishing an environment where the children and staff can move by the best routes to accomplish the objectives of the reading program. This direction is determined by all members of

the school team as they work together to help children read.

Control is needed to check on progress in fulfilling goals. This function is especially important if schools are going to be held accountable for their success or failure.

Innovation is needed in any organization that wants to improve. As reading teachers look for better ways to accomplish a goal, new methods, materials, and equipment can be brought into the classroom.

Representation of the school to the public is done by all members of the school team. Good public relations will be the result of well-planned news releases, study groups, PTA meetings, and open houses where the reading story of the school can be told.

Communication is a vital part of the management functions, because none of the others can be carried out without this. Plans or innovations cannot be achieved until they are communicated to those who will have a part in implementing them. If the whole team is involved in setting objectives, then communication will be more efficient because all are informed of the plans for the reading programs.

Reading is not the only subject taught in schools. In addition to planning for other subject areas, members of the school team have other school related responsibilities that consume much of their valuable time. Thus, some responsibilities for the reading program need to be delegated to individuals and small groups. To help plan the school reading program, to help in the selection of new materials and equipment, to see that materials are managed properly, and to do other tasks which will help create an efficient and productive reading environment,

it is recommended that the R3C Concept -- reading coordinator, reading committee, reading center concept -- be established.

Most leaders seem to have intelligence, confidence, and dedication. Hopefully a school will have a teacher who is interested in reading, who would devote the time needed to provide leadership for the reading program, and who would have intelligence, confidence, and dedication. If so, this person might be designated as reading coordinator by the principal and assigned the authority to help manage the reading program. If the right person is not available, the program should be delayed until a capable teacher is identified. The facetious contention that people are eventually promoted to a level of incompetence as so beautifully described in The Peter Principle (6) should be warning enough that the wrong person could endanger the entire success of the R3C Concept.

Some of the duties of the reading coordinator might be as listed below:

1. To provide leadership for the school reading committee.
2. To develop and maintain a school reading center.
3. To be assigned to teaching reading as much as the school schedule will allow.
4. To serve as the IRA building representative.
5. To act as a resource person in reading for the principal and teachers.
6. To work with the principal on organization matters relating to the school reading program.

The school reading coordinator would have other duties according to the grade levels of children in her classes and the type of classes

assigned. This type of work is being done by dedicated teachers without special pay or additional time. These latter considerations are important in 1971 with costs being an important factor in planning as a result of inflation and other school finance problems. Also, members of a school team might resent people who have extra time or more money for doing tasks no more important than those being done by others. The duties of the reading coordinator can be performed by existing reading teachers with no additional pay. The management task is to identify the leaders and to give them direction and authority to accomplish the goals established for them.

Some tasks of the reading coordinator require help and advice from teachers who deal with different age levels of children. For example, in a K-6 school, the reading coordinator might teach all the fifth and sixth year classes. He would hardly be in a position to know the needs of the K-4 teachers. By having a person from each grade level or from each two grade levels on the committee, all levels would be represented in the decision-making done by the committee.

Under the management by objectives approach, the principal might meet with the reading committee, and together they might analyze needs and agree on goals. Then the methods used by the committee would be up to them with little supervision needed by the principal (7). This does not, however, eliminate the need for evaluation meetings in future years. At such meetings goals should be restudied and changed if needed.

Some of the duties of the reading committee might be as follows:

1. To help evaluate the reading program.
2. To help new teachers learn about the school's reading program.
3. To help promote the school reading program to parents.
4. To plan and present programs in reading for faculty meetings.
5. To promote involvement of the school's teachers in in-service programs, the IRA, and other reading activities.
6. To aid in the selection of new materials for the reading progra
7. To promote the use of innovative reading programs.

The school reading center should contain materials that are available to all teachers in the school. It should not duplicate or compete with the school library but rather contain those materials typically used in classrooms as supplementary materials. Those items used daily such as basal reader should remain in rooms. Rather, books from previous reading adoptions, co-basal readers, kits, skillbooks, games, sight cards, tests, keys, answer sheets, equipment and other materials that could be used by more than one teacher in the school should be placed in the reading center for all to use.

The reading classes taught by the reading coordinator will of course determine some of the materials that should be placed in the reading center. It would seem that the higher the grade levels the wider the differences are in ability to read. Thus, the level where the widest differences occur in the school might be the logical level for the reading coordinator to teach since there would be a greater need for the non-basal reading materials housed in the school reading center.

Effective management of the reading center would insure that the materials would have a higher utilization than before the establishment

of the reading center. A list of materials and equipment available could be arranged during pre-school meetings so that teachers would be reminded of the materials in the reading center. The checking out procedure should be simple with no time limits so that teachers would feel free to use the reading center materials without any "red tape." A good environment of the reading center would cause all teachers to feel that they could utilize the resources at any time before, during, or after the school day (4).

The establishment of a school reading center is a task that would be done because it would help teachers to achieve the goals of the school reading program. Another task might be to utilize tutors to help children who have reading problems. Assuming that the school staff has agreed on objectives for the school reading programs and has established the R3C Concept, the management functions might be applied to the organization of a tutorial program as follows.

The principal would meet with the reading committee to discuss the use of tutors in the school reading program to accomplish goals already established. If it was determined that the idea had merit, the committee would begin planning how to best proceed. The reading coordinator might study the needs and resources available and report back to the committee. Then detailed planning might begin.

Staffing might be achieved by using volunteers from colleges, civic organizations, parents in the school district, or from the student body. Direction would be needed, perhaps by a teacher with released time. For example, the organization of the school schedule might provide for three periods of remedial reading. The teacher assigned to the tutorial

project might use one of the periods to manage the tutoring program. This might result in thirty upper grade volunteers working during their lunch hour with thirty lower grade children on a one-to-one basis rather than six children receiving six-to-one instruction from the teacher.

Control for the project could be pre and post test evaluation and by interest shown through visits to the program by members of the reading committee. Innovative practices such as inservice training for the tutors could be recommended by the committee. Representation of the project could be made to the teachers at faculty meetings, to parents at PTA study groups, and to the general public through newspaper articles or on television. Communication would need to be done throughout the project to keep lower grade teachers informed of progress being made by their children, to the tutors and students, to parents, and to the rest of the faculty.

Schools are not the same as factories. Schools are concerned with the needs of individuals rather than dealing with profit from production and sales. Nevertheless, management functions so successfully developed for industry and government can be applied to the school reading program. Good management is good because it is able to make better use of resources than is poor management. Perhaps a humanistic management is needed which will take into account not only the need to better organize and manage materials and facilities but also the needs of each individual in the school.

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